



Congressman

Henry A. Waxman's

Washington Reporter

Special Edition

With Safety and Consumer Tips

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

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and Employment

Dear Friend:

In the past several years, life has become harder for consumers. Our two major consumer protection agencies — the Federal Trade Commission and the Consumer Product Safety Commission — have become less effective. Both agencies have suffered from budget cuts, reduced staff, and lack of support from top Administration officials.

Twice in the last two years, I have had to fight desperately to prevent the closure of the Los Angeles Federal Trade Commission office. Since 1980, the staff of the Consumer Product Safety Commission office in Los Angeles has dwindled from 21 people to 6. Were it not for stiff Congressional opposition, the entire agency would have been eliminated and its functions incorporated into the work of the business-dominated Department of Commerce.

I pledge to continue my efforts in the House of Representatives to protect consumers from dangerous products, and from fraudulent advertising and sales schemes. I hope this newsletter proves useful to you.

Sincerely,

HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress

Has Your Car Been Recalled?

Unfortunately, millions of American and foreign cars have been recalled in recent years.

Every auto owner should be aware of the **AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE**. This Hotline is maintained by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. It is open from 5:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Los Angeles time (hours reflect time zone differences). Callers must have accurate information on the brand, model, and year of the car about which they wish to inquire.

**Auto Safety Hotline
Toll-Free Number
1-800-424-9393**

Below is a partial list of some large-scale recalls. The list is by no means complete.

Recent Recalls

General Motors 1983 (*Brake Valve Defect*)

A Cars: Chevrolet Celebrity, Pontiac 6000, Oldsmobile Ciera, Buick Century.

J Cars: Cavalier, Pontiac 2000, Oldsmobile Firenza, Buick Skyhawk, Cadillac Cimarron

X Cars: Chevrolet Citation, Pontiac Phoenix, Oldsmobile Omega, Buick Skylark.

Fords 1970 - (some) 1980

All models with automatic transmission are liable to jump from "park" to "reverse" position. Ford has notified all owners. (A reminder label was also sent to 1967-1969 owners with the same information.)

Chrysler (*Defect in gas tank mounting strap*)

1976-1978 Plymouth Arrow
1976-1978 Dodge Colt

Datsun (*Defect in fuel tank side supports*)

1974-1978 B-210 Hatchback/Coupe

1973-1979 Hondas, all models

Under carriage corrosion.

Volkswagen Rabbits (Recall notices to arrive soon)

1975-1979 — *Brake liner problem.*
1975-1979 — *Fuel pump problem.*

Unsolicited Merchandise

Under United States Postal regulations, you are absolutely **NOT** required to pay for or return anything you receive in the mail that you did not order.

The rule applies regardless of whether the sender is a business or charity. It applies to all merchandise including address labels, key chain license plates, trinkets, or items of greater value. You may keep the merchandise.

For further information, call the postal inspector at 688-2180.

Warning On Cordless Telephones

Users of cordless or portable telephones should always make certain that the phone is in the "Talk" position **before** bringing the phone to their ear. Should the phone ring while still in the "Listen" position, the user may be exposed to an extremely loud ring.

Some cordless phone users have complained that the ring was so loud as to be painful. Some doctors speculate that the ring might result in some hearing loss.

To file complaints or obtain additional information, consumers should call the Consumer Product Safety Commission toll-free hotline at 1-800-638-CPSC. The Teletypewriter number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-638-8270.

Auto Safety for Kids and Adults Protect Infants and Children

Under California law, parents and other drivers must strap infants and small children up to 4 years of age or 40 pounds of weight into a child safety seat or safety belt. Parents driving their own car must use a federally approved child safety seat. All other drivers must use either a federally approved safety seat or seat belt. (The only safe way to drive with an infant is in a safety seat.)

Safety experts predict thousands of children will be spared serious injury or death if people comply with the new law. A good car seat which can be used from birth to four years of age costs about \$40.00.

The most dangerous myth is that a baby is safe sitting on someone's lap or cuddled in someone's arms. Research shows that the **most** dangerous place for a baby in an accident is on the lap of the front seat passenger.

The Automobile Club of Southern California and the American Academy of Pediatrics, offer a free shopping guide, "Will You Give Your Child the Perfect Gift?". It lists federally approved child safety seats and gives helpful tips.

Update on Seat Belts

The Auto Club also offers a pamphlet with details on the types and brands of seat belts recommended for adults and older children. The booklet is free.

Local numbers to request Auto Club Booklets:

Hollywood: 666-2420 Downtown 741-3111
North Hollywood: 984-0410
Century City 227-0900

To check on whether your child safety seat or seat belt set meet current standards, simply call: (213) 204-1100 or Toll Free number 1-800-CAR-SEAT. Be sure you have the brand name and model number about which you wish to inquire.

Below are some excerpts from a recent Los Angeles Times editorial. The editorial discussed in detail the efforts by Rep. Henry A. Waxman and other members of Congress to preserve the power and autonomy of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Los Angeles Times

October 21, 1983

Politics vs. Consumers

The Consumer Product Safety Commission has been responsible over the last 10 years for the recall of millions of appliances, toys, tools and other articles that it considered potentially dangerous. Its supporters credit the commission with preventing 500 deaths and 250,000 injuries annually.

Critics of the watchdog agency belittle its effort, claiming that manufacturers would have made their products safer even without government oversight.

The point is debatable. But there can be no argument whatever over the effect of a measure . . . now pending in Congress. Its single purpose is to deprive the agency of its enforcement powers and

leave it with nothing but an advisory role. . . .

But if Congress is determined to review the actions of the commission, a more reasonable approach, also before the conference committee, is that of Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.). Under his proposal, commission orders automatically would take effect within 90 days unless Congress disapproved.

Waxman's plan would enable the commission to carry out its responsibilities, would grant the legislative branch the right to challenge its actions, and would also conform to the Supreme Court ruling . . .

Buying By Mail or Phone

Some of America's most reputable retailers have been selling by mail for decades. Unfortunately, some of America's least reputable retailers are doing the same thing. Recently, mail order firms have been encouraging the use of 1-800 toll-free phone numbers, coupled with billing orders to a national credit card.

Here are some warnings to consumers:

- You take a much bigger chance when you order by phone because telephone orders are **not** protected by the Federal laws which apply to mail orders. Orders filled by mail are much more likely than phone orders to meet Federal Trade Commission rules about promptness of delivery and refunds for unavailable products.

- Be especially wary of mail order firms with no established reputation. Fly-by-night companies are responsible for most of the complaints about false advertising, unfilled orders and damaged merchandise.

- Record as much information as possible about your order. If you order by phone, you should be sure to get the full address of the company. It is important to keep a record of the company's name, the item ordered (with catalogue number, if possible), price per item, total cost (including tax and shipping charges), and how you paid — credit card, check (including check number). Be sure to keep a record of both the date the order was placed and the promised date of delivery. Also, keep a copy of the newspaper ad, catalogue or mail order offer on which you based your order.

- Never send cash.

What to do when a mail order goes wrong

The first step to take if you are having trouble with a

Arthritis Sufferers, Beware of Quacks and False Remedies

Fortunately, a well-trained and experienced physician can do much to alleviate the suffering of arthritis patients. Unfortunately, there is still no cure for arthritis. People with severe cases of this disease are often victims of quacks and unscrupulous promoters of secret cures, gadgets, "new" drugs, and an endless variety of contraptions and "medications".

The Arthritis Foundation urges people to be suspicious of a long list of cures and treatments, including the following:

- Devices such as copper bracelets, vibrators, massagers, radioactive electrical or magnetic gadgets.
- Vaccines.
- Male or female hormone.
- Snake or bee venom.
- Such discredited "discoveries" as Gerovital H 3, Liefcort and cocaine.
- Bizarre dietary or vitamin regimens.
- Clinics in Mexico or other foreign countries which make spectacular claims.

For a complete review of suspicious arthritis "remedies", please contact our local Arthritis Foundation for the latest information available.

mail order is to write or phone the company. Give all pertinent **specifics** of your case. Be brief and courteous.

If you have placed your order by mail or followed up a phone order by mailing a check, the U.S. Postal Service may be able to help you. For information about how to file a complaint of mail fraud, call 688-2180.

Consumer Notes for Children

Mesh Playpens

There have been reports of two deaths due to malfunctions of mesh-sided playpens.

Children should never be left in a mesh-sided crib or playpen with one or both sides down. The danger of these cribs and playpens comes from the fact that even a young infant can move to the edge of the mattress and become trapped between the loose mesh and the floor board or mattress. This can cause suffocation.

Baby Gates

Accordion-style baby gates with V-shaped openings across the top and diamond-shaped openings on the side are extremely dangerous. There have been a number of deaths and near-deaths resulting from babies getting caught in the V-shaped openings. Recall details have not yet been worked out. At this time, people should stop using this style of baby gate.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends gates with a solid, straight-topped edge and rigid-mesh screen.

Stringed Mobiles

Two babies strangled to death on stringed mobiles. Despite a nationally publicized recall, many of these dangerous mobiles are still in use.

If you have any questions about these items or any other toys or play equipment, call the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The Commission also welcomes your calls regarding unsafe products about which appropriate action has not yet been taken.

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
TOLL-FREE PHONE NUMBER:
1-800-638-CPSC
Teletypewriter 1-800-638-8270

Do You Have A Smoke Detector?

Every home or apartment should have at least one smoke detector for each floor. Most people who die in fires are not killed by heat or flames. They die from smoke inhalation.

Smoke detectors can be operated either from your household electricity or by flashlight batteries. There are good quality detectors of both kinds.

If you live in the City of Los Angeles in an apartment building, you must have smoke detectors installed by a licensed electrical contractor. You may use either battery or house electricity detectors in a single family home.

Make sure your smoke detector works

About once a month, smoke detectors should be tested by holding a burning match or cigarette near the detector. Batteries should generally be replaced about once a year. A good battery-operated detector will make a soft beeping noise when the battery is beginning to weaken. Replace the battery at once.

After the detector goes off, then what?

You should have a carefully thought out plan on how to respond in case of fire. It makes good sense to decide which exits are most accessible and who should take responsibility for invalids, small children, and pets.

Our fire department experts recommend family fire drills both under lighted conditions and in darkness.

For further information

For further information on smoke detectors, call the toll-free Consumer Product Safety Commission hotline 1-800-638-CPSC.

For questions about building, remodeling, and installing detectors in apartment houses, call the Los Angeles City Department of Building and Safety at 485-2396.

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Official Business

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United States Congressman